

JOY

Pastors often hear people saying, "I've lost my joy," and they will likely be asked this question, "How can I get my joy back?" The truth is, no pastor has a magic wand that he can quickly wave to restore your joy! The problem with most of us is that we are trying to sustain our own joy and not the joy we have in the Lord. Philippians 4:4 tells us to, "**Rejoice in the Lord always.**" If this is not possible we would never have been asked to do it! Therefore, maintaining our joy is entirely about the Lord and has nothing to do with our own efforts. Our own joy is subject to fluctuations and variations, but the joy we experience in God's presence is totally dependable. Habakkuk 3:18 says, "**I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.**"

The greatest joy is "joy in the Lord." This is confirmed in Psalm 16:11: "**You (God) will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**" Fullness of joy cannot be improved upon, because nothing is fuller than full. And this joy is attributable to the presence of God alone, not the endeavours of man. **Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.** That is why we struggle to sustain it on our own. If you have lost your joy it's probably because you have ceased to seek God's presence. Despondency will always follow any decision to avoid your priorities, and your number one priority should be to seek God's presence in every situation. In Psalm 61 King David petitioned God saying, "**Increase the days of the king's life, his years for many generations. May he be enthroned in God's presence forever; appoint your love and faithfulness to protect him.**" I love this heartfelt sentiment! May I too be enthroned in God's presence forever.

Psalm 84:5 declares, "**What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.**" There are pilgrimages that help us to gain the fist-hand knowledge of God's love and faithfulness in a very real and powerful way. The outcome of this is seen in verse seven, "**They will continue to grow stronger.**" We are made stronger in God's presence, as His joy becomes a greater reality to us. God wants us to succeed in these pilgrimages toward His heart. Besides using them to display His power to us, He will also minister to us in a way that strengthens and encourages us. The joy of the Lord is our strength!

Each pilgrimage that we complete (into God's presence) will enhance the joy and strength that we experience. Also, we must remember that it is His desire to develop and deepen the relationship we have with Him. Therefore, if we turn back from a pilgrimage we should simply start it again. God is there to help us and fill us with **joy** inexpressible.